

The Chosen One

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What does it mean to be lost? You lose a sock, a fingernail, a memory to time. You don't lose an entire person. But, of course, you can. Absent: too easy, like you just decided not to show up. Missing: can be the simultaneous action of not being there and the regret for the absence of the one no longer there. How long do you go on searching?

It's Friday night and Devon's rolled over in bed facing me, which means he wants sex. I count to five slowly in my head and sure enough his hand reaches over and pinches my nipple, hard. A moan escapes me, and, if he bothered to ask, I wouldn't be able to tell him if it was from pleasure or irritation. We've been together for three years, the longest relationship for either of us. We run like clockwork. Marathon sex sessions have turned into ten minutes on Friday nights between reruns of *Friends* and *The Late Show*.

"Be my little dirty girl," he rasps against my stomach and I thrust my hips up for him to enjoy, tug on his hair so he knows I'm into it—try to act like a normal girlfriend.

When I close my eyes, an image of a blonde with large breasts, kneeling in front of a man, is burned on my retinas. I shake my head back and forth on my pillow and remember to moan a little more. Devon likes when I moan and tremble.

When we were born, my sister and I, our mother was obsessed with Greek mythology. Other babies got teddy bears and butterflies for their nurseries. Ours had elaborate golden scrollwork and wallpaper covered in a fleet of triremes, little wooden warships, their rows of oars raised to sail off on presumed grand adventures. I guess she focused on the lavishness and romance, not all the incest and rape strewn throughout the stories. Sometimes I wondered if her imposing these myths into our mere mortal lives hadn't incurred a curse, something to anger the gods, or at least make them take notice.

We're in the ninth minute and Devon has swung my hips over to the edge of the bed, thrown my legs over his shoulders as he enters me standing up. His eyes are closed and his head reared back, exposing his vulnerable throat. If I wanted, I could kick him in the Adam's apple hard enough to end his life, claim it was kinky sex gone wrong. That would make for an awkward court case.

He opens his eyes and looks down at me. Caught unguarded, he must not like my expression because he finishes quickly.

"Damn, babe," he says. A few minutes later and he's back to the TV. I'm on the computer in the adjoining study. He shouts from the bedroom, "I don't know how you can watch porn all the time and never want sex."

I ignore him and open my notebook to a clean sheet.

As an animal control agent I don't always work normal business hours. The latest case is a bad one, a couple with at least thirty dogs in a doublewide, and I'm afraid that's a low estimate. I've worked on dozens of animal hoarder cases. They're all the same, deplorable living conditions and a person inflicting harm on animals they supposedly love. Vows that nobody could take better care of them uttered even as we're removing emaciated bodies from the property. One lady had ninety-nine rabbits in her home. When asked why, she replied, *Because a hundred would have been nuts.*

Today, though, is a Monday at three in the afternoon and the small office feels crowded with Mac, Annette, and myself huddled over our desks. I've just got back from surveillance and am confident that we'll receive a court order to extricate the dogs from the couple soon.

Mac is on the phone and Annette is at the copier machine. I lean into my computer and click on a popular porn site, make sure the volume is turned off. A dark-skinned girl is giving a guy a blowjob and I rapidly click to another trending video of a golden-skinned girl in stilettos bending over and pulling her panties aside to expose her clean-shaven crotch, like she's still eight years old. Mac's call ends

and he asks me how the surveillance went this morning. I glance briefly in his direction and nod my head.

“Good,” I say.

Come on. Let’s see the face. Turn around already.

Mac taps his pencil along the edge of his desk. Stands and shuffles a few papers.

The girl on screen is getting pounded from behind by a huge Latino man with a tattoo of a rose on his lower stomach. His face is blurred out.

Annette bangs on the copier. “Another freaking paper jam. I am so sick of this ancient piece of crap.”

“Um-hmm,” I mumble sympathetically but noncommittally.

Annette is seven months pregnant and is constantly asking me to do stuff for her, like fix paper jams.

I stare at the screen. I’m looking for a prettier version of me. The Latino pulls the blonde’s hair hard and the camera angle shifts to her face, which is pretty but with a nose too wide to be Piedra.

My mother always said my sister and I were close and photos

seem to prove that, but somehow who she was has gotten too tangled up in news stories and time-progression drawings for me to know what’s real and what is faulty memory. Like the myth of Atlantis that some historians swear is not only a tale written by Plato, but an actual island that once existed somewhere in the vast Atlantic. The story goes that Poseidon carved the mountains of Atlantis into a palace for his lover, Cleito, and protected it with rings of moats and walls constructed of rock, brass, tin, and copper-rich orichalcum so no men could reach her. Yet, even with all these precautions, one day a horrific earthquake sunk the mystical island, causing the waters over it to be impassible, gulfs and eddies the only evidence of its violent disappearance.

My mother is waiting for me at Faraldo’s, her favorite Italian

restaurant in town. Not that there’s tremendous competition in our

hamlet of Westbriar, Connecticut, which is nowhere near Hartford or the trendy seaside resorts. Still, even in this podunk part of the state, our family is considered nouveau riche since our money only goes back a generation. My mom's father had invented a clip to keep lawn hoses tightly rolled when not in use. It had been a hit on the newly popular QVC channel. The credit goes to my young mother, who'd had the foresight to fill out an application and send a sample clip into the show. Now you can buy them at any major retailer. Before that, my grandfather had been an accountant, his biggest claim to fame uncovering an embezzlement scandal at the Presbyterian church.

By the time I arrive, Mother has already ordered hot tea and the Caesar salad with chicken for both of us. Her hands are folded neatly in her lap waiting for me. Nothing annoys her more than lateness. She guards her time like she's working on the cure for cancer instead of organizing potluck suppers for the local branch of Conservatives for Congress.

"Hi, Evelyn. How are you?" I ask. My mother has insisted, ever since Piedra's disappearance, that I call her by her first name.

"Wonderful." My mother aims a closed-mouthed smile in my direction as I pull back my chair and place the napkin in my lap. She picks up her fork and we chew through the first few minutes.

She clears her throat. "Sources say Congressman Slade broke up with his longtime girlfriend," she says.

Mom is always using terms like *sources say*, *retaliate*, and *political action*. Usually I can nod and stay quiet and she'll move on to the next topic relatively quickly but today she just pauses after this comment like she expects me to say something.

"Oh, I hadn't heard."

"Of course not. I swear, I don't know how you survive with your head up in the clouds all the time."

"Well, it's a shame about his girlfriend, I guess."

"Is it?" She arches a finely plucked eyebrow and spears another piece of lettuce to pop in her perfectly pinked mouth.

I sigh. "I don't know, Mom—Evelyn. I'm in the middle of this

hoarder case and can't really think about anything else."

An image of the Latino's rose tattoo slides through my vision, replacing the sprig of lavender gypsophila in the center of the table.

"Really, Gillian. Why don't you get a real job?"

"You don't care about animals?"

"Yes, of course I do, everybody cares about animals but what about all the abused children in the world? What about them? You would think you'd spend your time focused on changing that, instead of playing with dogs and cats all day."

I nod and stay quiet. When my mother lifts her teacup to her lips, I notice how small the rounded bottom is, how it might fit perfectly in the palm of a young girl's hand.

After my father died, my mother took a married lover, a

politician of some rank. When her turn to host bridge club came around, she would assure the ladies he was just a strong ally due to the legislature she'd tried to pass in Piedra's name. At the mention of my sister, all questions would cease and someone would remark on the deliciousness of my mother's soufflé and wouldn't she share the recipe. The last time the politician visited our house, he gifted mother with a tiny golden llama. After a pitcher of gin fizzies she told me the story of the Incas and how they'd used llamas to conquer their mountainous territory to become one of the most powerful civilizations in history. Then she let me hold the golden creature. It weighed next to nothing and fit snugly in my preteen hand. She leaned back on the green-pillowed couch.

"They sacrificed their children, their special children," she whispered, "left them exposed on the mountain peaks for the gods," before rubbing her eyes and staring at me blankly like she'd forgotten I was there.

The apartment is quiet except for Devon's snores. I've been on half a dozen porn sites and am about to turn the computer off when I see her.

She's on her knees with three men's junk in her face. Her hair is a darker shade than photos but the eyes are Piedra's cornflower blue. I take a screen shot of an up-close of her face. I zoom in on the eyes. Flecks of jade ring the inner iris and I'm certain. My heart pounds in my throat while I clutch the phone to my ear. Its crazy thrumming makes it difficult to hear anything other than its flood of beats.

I am gasping, my mouth opening and closing with a little popping sound.

The roar in my ears starts to subside and I catch my breath enough to get out, "I saw her."

"Hi, Gilly. How are you? My shoulder is acting up but other than that I'm doing fine, thanks for asking."

"Frank this is serious. I'm telling you it's Piedra."

"Sure, Gilly, like two years ago when we spent fifty thousand of the bureau's money to go down to Argentina and bust a wannabe porn star and her boyfriend, who ended up suing the department, remember? I almost got fired for that one. Or the time before that when we went to Costa Rica? Or Venezuela? Look, I know this news story coming out of the Dominican Republic has got to be dredging up all kinds of memories, but you're gonna have to let this one go."

"What news story?"

A muffled voice says something in harsh tones in the background. Frank's wife, Mindy, probably telling him to take it easy on me. But who knows, maybe she's tired of my calls, too.

"What news story, Frank?"

"Jesus, Gilly. Stop watching porn for a second and turn on CNN."

I click on the bedroom TV and there's a photo of a girl in front of a cake with seven candles, smoke wafting up toward her gap-toothed grin. This is replaced by a woman frantically clenching and unclenching a gray cardigan, too heavy for the palm trees over to the side where a boy, about five or six, is standing with an older woman. Footage runs of a high-class resort in Punta Cana like a vacation ad, then they quickly switch back to the distraught parents, the mother

repeating, “They were sleeping. The room was locked,” over and over. I know most people watching will feel sympathy for her. Some will swear she’s lying.

Devon throws his pillow at me and grumbles, “*Christ*, Gilly. Stop waking me up.”

When I was still young I used to have fantasies that Piedra had

not been taken for harm, but stolen by an exotic prince whose own wife, either not to disturb her extraordinary beauty or who failed to carry a baby to term, remained childless. In these fantasies, Piedra lived in a grand mansion in a golden room filled with satin pillows in shades of pink and lavender, with servants that granted her every whim, enormous float-on pool toys with a view overlooking the Aegean Sea for a backyard. Those days I could actually convince myself to be jealous of my princess sister, while I sulked in my drab room with only pages torn out of magazines taped over faded Greek ships no longer seeking adventure. I’d turn my face from my newly acquired computer to the window, checking if the dogwood’s buds had opened yet—tiny green pocketbooks of promise—and wonder why they hadn’t chosen me, lying right next to her in the bed.

I was six when Piedra was removed from our lives. A woman

entered our hotel room, scooped her up, and told me to go back to sleep. I was a good girl and did as I was told. Mom and Dad came back from a late dinner at the resort’s cabana bar, not a hundred feet from our suite, to one less daughter. Mom shook me awake as Dad sped from the room to check the bathroom, their room, then under my bed, his movements getting faster, then jerking to a stop when he rapidly ran out of hiding places or suddenly realized the entire world was now one huge hiding place.

The first hour after an abduction is critical. Every hour after that, the chances your child will come home alive dwindle into a dismal abyss toward zero. If you haven’t found her within three days, the cops are only hoping for the best, usually the retrieval of a body

so they can try to piece together some sort of explanation. A very low percentage are taken by the classic stranger-danger scenario we grow up so afraid of. The vast majority are stolen by people they know, people closer to home.

When the police asked me later about the woman, I told them I thought maybe it was my mother or a dream. Everything had been fuzzy with sleep, the warmth of the vacation sun still clinging to our skin from earlier in the day, making little furnaces of our bodies underneath the sheets. My mom had snapped that *of course it wasn't her*, my father staring blankly at me.

When Hades asked Zeus for his daughter, Persephone, Zeus obliged without consulting her mother, Demeter, or Persephone. Hades tore a meadow of narcissus open and plucked her away to his underworld realm of the sleeping and the dead. When Demeter discovered the deception, she rained drought and famine across the land until Zeus relented and demanded Hades return the beautiful maiden to her mother for the sake of the world. While this makes for a fantastic tale, in reality the decimation only occurs in one suburban house engulfed in a neighborhood of abundance, and no matter how lavish the display of sorrow, none of it will bring the missing back.

There's a patch of dirt in front of the doublewide. Mac is ahead of me, right behind the two police officers that have come along to issue the court order for us to search the premises. He gets over-excited at these extractions, calls them *raids* and starts talking about how he almost went into law enforcement. The stocky policeman named Rogers knocks on the aluminum doorframe and the entire stoop rattles. A few dog barks pop inside, but mostly there's a low-emitting whine behind the door like an electric generator that could blow at any moment.

An overweight lady in a stained nightshirt cracks open the door and scowls at us.

"What you want?" She haughtily points her chin high and scans

down the men to me standing in her dirt patch like she's Queen of Sheba and we're disturbing her rest. When she opens the door further and Officer Rogers hands her the court order, I think she's going to let us in peacefully. Then she yanks on Mac's arm hard enough to make him fall off the stoop. The officers have her out of the trailer and in handcuffs with only a short scuffle.

Even the surgical mask over my mouth and nose can't kill the overwhelming stench of excrement, piles of old dog poo so close together I can't help but step through it to get to the cages. Wire cages are stacked on top of each other, making a jagged path through the trailer like a morbid maze. There's not much fresh poo because the poor creatures hadn't eaten enough in recent weeks to make elimination a necessity. A heap in the corner looks like old rags until an ear perks up as I approach. This one's uncaged, whether forgotten or a favorite is hard to say. Under all the matted fur my best guess is a cocker spaniel but it's really impossible to tell until we get it back to the center and shave the coat off, assess the severity of the physical injuries.

When I bring out the first dog the lady screams, "These are my pets. I love my pets. You got no right to come in here." I don't look at her as I carry the light weight in my arms, outstretched like an offering. The bulge of an organ presses against the skin of his severely curved-in abdomen, a spleen or some other necessary organ shutting down from malnutrition. I place him gently on one of the blanket-lined cages in the back of the van. His heart is beating in over-stressed staccato and I check that no one's at the door of the van before whispering, "settle down, go back to sleep."

An extremely low percentage of kidnapped victims are taken for their organs. They are harvested like so much wheat or barley. So, maybe there really was an exotic princess, small and about Piedra's size when she was taken, who was sickly and in need. And her father stole my sister in the early night to save his own diminutive daughter, which felt like saving an entire country, an empire, while his wife

wept for both another mother's sacrifice and her own precious one's rejuvenation.

I can't stop thinking we're losing time. I want to tell my mother that I have found Piedra, but it's like I am still six years old and I know she doesn't want to hear what I have to say.

Frank's standing in the middle of my apartment, his face beet-red. He's just told me he's retiring next month and I can keep his extra files. He's carried up three boxes of paperwork associated with Piedra's case and dumped them on my couch beside Devon, who throws a look that says *what the fuck* my way before getting up and heading into the bedroom. Frank's viewed the video I forwarded and determined it probably originated in Ecuador, but thinks the facial-recognition analysis is not clear enough to determine if it's Piedra.

My heart rages out of control. Tiny black flecks fade into my peripheral and I can, once again, focus on the man who's been my main contact at the missing persons department for two decades.

"Frank, you can't *quit*."

"I can. And I am."

I point a finger, which feels disconnected from me, like my head and body are no longer working together. "You told me you would *never* stop looking for my sister. That's what you said."

"*Christ*, Gilly, that was twenty years ago. We haven't had a legitimate lead in all that time."

"You *promised* me. You held my hand during Dad's funeral and *promised* me you would never give up."

"Shit, Gilly," Frank says in a softer tone and flips the flap of the cardboard box on top. "I'm an old man. I'm sorry, but I'm tired and your sister is gone."

I fight the urge to cross the room and give him a hug. Christ, *he's* the one letting *me* down. "The news said the little brother of that Dominican Republic girl described a woman in their room the night she was taken. Maybe that's a lead, if you don't believe me about Piedra being the one in the video."

"I just think you're looking for something that's no longer there."

I raise my voice, trying to convince somebody. "What do I have to do? Go down there by myself?"

"Don't you dare, Gilly. You'd be obstructing an open case, hurting that little girl's chances of ever being found."

"Oh, like my sister? What about my sister's chances, Frank?"

"For Christ sake, Gilly, your sister is thirty years old. If she's even alive, she's making her own choices now."

"Do you really believe that?" I ask, and I can't contain the disgust in my voice.

Frank flips the flap of the cardboard box back over and admits, "No," but his voice is so low, I'm not sure if he said it or if it's just my imagination.

Persephone was the prisoner of Hades in the underworld for a year before her mother's earthly destruction gained Zeus' attention and he demanded her release. In the tale, Hades tricks Persephone into eating the seeds of a pomegranate, thereby ensuring she must remain in his realm. Most versions of the myth claim she had no foreknowledge of her act's consequences. Regardless of her intentions, she escapes to the land of the living and normalcy for at least part of the year, keeping her in touch with her family and reality, and causing her mother to relent and bring spring and summer. An alternate version claims the young maiden willingly ate the seeds knowing that she would be forced to remain with her captor, because even though she was unhappy when he seized her, she had grown fond of her abductor. I like to think of Persephone not as the goddess of the underworld or Hades's wife, but as the first written case of Stockholm syndrome. Who knows? Maybe the pomegranate seeds are just a precautionary symbol for heroin, a more modern method of keeping the girls in line.

The South African civil-rights poet, Ingrid Jonker, walked into the South Atlantic waters of Three Anchor Bay and committed

suicide by drowning. When they discovered her body, her father, who was in charge of literature censorship for the conservative National Party, reportedly said, *They can throw her back into the sea for all I care*. She died at age thirty-one the greatest Afrikaans poet of her generation. Nelson Mandela read her poem, “The child (who was shot dead by soldiers at Nyanga),” at his inaugural State of the Nation address in parliament. The poem imagines the child in everything South African. In it, he did not die, but grew into a man and journeyed the world. It is hard to find any quotes from Jonker’s father that don’t pertain to his daughter. Maybe they have been censored from history.

Three years after Piedra got taken, my parents divorced. At the time it felt like my father had tossed me back into oblivion, too. As an adult I realize my parents hung in longer than most marriages with abducted or dead children between them. They survived the speculation that their daughter might be dead. It was the team of FBI agents calmly discussing alternate possibilities, the term *child pornography* repeated in hushed, almost revered tones, in our living room, and then screamed throughout the house after the three men left, that started my mother taking her five o’clock refreshments at noon and my dad wandering the halls all night. My father would stand up abruptly from the dinner table or the couch in a state of panic and rush out of the room like there was something he’d forgotten to do, until one day he walked out and kept walking all the way to the divorce attorney’s office on Second Street.

The day the papers were filed, he told me I could have anything I wanted. We drove to the electronics store, one town over, where I picked out the newest computer on the shelf and an internet modem. So, while the other kids in fourth grade were searching how to make paperclip bracelets, I was looking up the term *child pornography*. At nine years old in 1998, I started watching porn. By now I’ve seen it all. Nothing much surprises me. I’ve perused all the categories from agalmatophilia to zoophilia—although, I spend most of my time in the more humdrum category of *blondes*. This doesn’t really narrow

it down that much since it's the largest category by far on most sites. Honestly, after a while it all tends to blur. I daze out through most of it. The girl appears reluctant, which immediately turns to enthusiastic fellatio, then she's subjugated by whichever form of sexual intercourse the videographer decides will get the most views. Ninety-nine percent of the "endings" are close-ups of the girl's face being jacked off on.

Human trafficking is a growing trend for political discussion. Worldwide it's a thirty-two billion dollar industry and occurs in virtually every country. Typically, the richer countries have higher import rates while poorer countries have higher export rates. Overall, the largest percentage of human trafficking victims is for sexual exploitation. The second highest percent is forced labor. Although these vary by geographic location. Most victims are women or underage girls. Many are sold and then rented to customers for sex. In the low percentage that are taken for internet pornography, pale skin, blue eyes, and light hair are the most valuable—the snow bunnies. Since there's very low cost involved for the profit, it makes sense as a business plan. Think about it. You can sell a black-market gun only once, but a girl can be sold ten times a day.

In Greek mythology, Demeter was the goddess of many things, including agriculture, motherhood, and the blessed afterlife. She had a sacred grove of holy ancient trees, the epicenter of which was a massive oak. One day, despite many warnings, a mighty woodsman ravaged her forest and felled the trees, evoking the wish that they be the goddess herself. In Demeter's ire she punished the man with such a severe hunger that, like a burning fire, the more he consumed the more he craved. To the point where, with all provisions exhausted, he began to eat his own flesh and quite literally ate himself to death.

It's been a week and Frank's not returning my phone calls. It goes straight to voicemail. So when my cell vibrates on the nightstand at three in the morning with his number glowing, I'm surprised.

“Where you been, Frank? You get kidnapped?” I cringe at my own sick joke, but considering the time I won’t beat myself up too badly over it.

“Gilly.” Frank sounds muffled like he’s speaking into a wind tunnel. “Gilly. You’re not going to believe this.”

I sit up straight and throw the comforter off my legs, swivel and stand up beside the bed. Devon groans and pulls his pillow over his head.

I can barely get out, “What, Frank,” before he’s going on about Ecuador, foreign cops, and extradition. I rush to the bathroom and close the door. “Wait. What are you talking about?”

“I’ve found your sister.” There’s an edge to his voice that I haven’t heard since I was six years old, and I know I’m not going to want to hear his next words. “She took the missing Dominican Republic girl.”

It was not enough for the storytellers that poor Demeter suffer the abduction of her daughter. While she scoured the earth searching for her missing child she encountered Poseidon who desired to have sex with her against her wishes. Demeter escaped for a little while by changing into a mare and grazing among other horses. The forceful Poseidon, not to be beaten by the will of a woman, changed into a stallion and raped her—the same Poseidon who carved the mountains of Atlantis into a palace for his love with moats and walls to keep her safe from other men.

After Piedra was taken, the media had a field day with my parents. They described in intimate detail the lobster dinner they’d eaten at the cabana bar while a stranger entered our hotel room and snatched their oldest daughter out of our lives. A resort employee, who chose to remain anonymous, reported hearing my mother snap at us in the pool earlier that day. Another came forward to describe how our father spanked Piedra in the hallway outside our door. She claimed he’d tugged down her pajama pants, the ones with tiny green

turtles all over them that the police had found behind a bush near the parking lot.

Even after the police investigation cleared my father of all charges, the tabloids kept fresh rumors circulating. Theories, on why and how he could have molested her and thrown her body in the sea so close by, sold magazines.

When he killed himself six years later, the first responders thought it was only a car accident, a distracted or drunk driver who lost control and ran his car off the bridge and into the deepest part of the river. It wasn't until we discovered his suicide note stuck with a magnet to the front of his refrigerator like an innocent grocery list, that we knew for sure. All he'd written was one phrase—*I swear I never touched her with anything but love*—scrawled over and over, filling five pages. I wasn't yet a teenager, but I rimmed my eyes in black charcoal and weighed my grief against the guilt of my jealousy that he had not mentioned me, even once.

In 2004, the University of Connecticut's then-assistant basketball coach, Clyde Vaughan, told an undercover female cop posing as a prostitute that he knew how much she was worth and offered her ten bucks for oral sex. When he realized she was a policewoman he tried to bribe his way out of charges with basketball tickets and team paraphernalia. She wasn't a fan. He'd been arrested twice previously in Tampa and Long Beach.

When I enter the observation room at the Hartford correctional facility I know the partition is transparent only on my side. It's the same room they use for victims to observe their assailants, pick out a face to put with a crime. Years of imagining a tearful embrace at our reunion have dissolved into me behind glass.

Piedra sits at a metal table, handcuffed to the center. The investigators are placed so that they frame my sister and we have a dead-on view of her.

I thought my mother might show up today. We've been waiting

a long time for them to extradite Piedra back to the States, but Mother is absent. Frank stands behind me and squeezes my shoulder. I'd been right, he couldn't quit—at least not my sister's case with so many unraveled ends. He still retired, but not before following my lead one last time. There's still some good guys out there and, thank God, Frank's one of them.

The female investigator is asking Piedra questions that I'm sure she's answered many times before. This is the process, repetition to the point of apathy.

"Why did you take Missy Wilkerson?"

"They told me to."

"What did you say to make her leave with you?"

"The same thing the woman who took me said—I'm gonna kill your family if you don't come with me."

Sometimes I feel I lived it all with her, and other times, like the mythical Atlantis, it feels like we never really existed at all (except in some man's imagination). Plato knew thousands of years ago that mystical places are never meant to be found. How long do you go on searching once this realization sinks in?

My gaze is so intense, I feel like I could burn holes through the partition as I take in Piedra, willing her to notice me, to know that I am no longer gone. Piedra's face is impassible, lips pressed so tight that tiny grooves appear around her mouth like fault lines, a blank stare buries any expression. As the investigator swivels in her chair, motioning for the officer at the door to unlock Piedra's handcuffs, the stare hardens as impenetrable as Poseidon's walls for Cleito. Call me a fool, but I swear I see a fleck of recognition in those blue, blue eyes—right before the hardening swallows it up.

